

PONY EXPRESS DAYS

★ ★ GUIDE 2018 ★ ★



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
May 30th to June 3rd

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

PONY EXPRESS DAYS



★ Wednesday,
May 30th
CHILI
COOK-OFF

★ Thursday,
May 31st
FIREMAN'S
MUSTER

★ Friday,
June 1st
DANCE



★ Saturday,
June 2nd
PANCAKE
BREAKFAST,
PARADE,
FESTIVAL
and more!

★ Saturday,
June 2nd &
Sunday, June 3rd
GYMKHANA

50TH ANNIVERSARY!



“From pregnancy to delivery, my midwife was my friend, my coach, and my **voice of reason.**”

- Scout Johnson

“The cord was wrapped around Walker’s head. But Lori, my midwife, calmly talked me through the scary few minutes. After she delivered his head, she let me take charge of the rest. It was an absolute adrenaline rush to be 100-percent involved in my baby’s birth. I’m a nurse and I know what kind of rigorous training midwives go through, but that emotional connection is what every mother deserves. Lori helped make my second child’s birth absolutely beautiful.”

- Scout Johnson

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THE MCKINLEYVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WELCOMES YOU to the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Pony Express Days.

The celebration began in 1968 as a family-friendly barbecue, parade and equestrian race and quickly became known as McKinleyville’s signature annual event. It has evolved through the years, with each year reflecting the interests of the town, the volunteers and others who make the celebration possible.



This year, Pony Express Days will include familiar favorites like the Chili Cook-off, Dance, Pancake Breakfast, Parade, Festival and the Gymkhana, with a few changes planned. Returning this year for the 50th Anniversary is the Fireman’s Muster, a much loved family friendly event!

We hope you will join us as you gather with your friends and neighbors to enjoy the celebration. Put on a cowboy hat, shine up your boots as we honor all things Mack Town!

The McKinleyville Chamber Board of Directors would like to thank you for supporting our wonderful McKinleyville community. We hope that you have fun and enjoy all of the festivities! For more information, call the McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce at (707) 839-2449 or visit our website: www.mckinleyvillechamber.com.



Cyndi Bainbridge
McKinleyville Chamber
of Commerce

1640 Central Ave.,
McKinleyville, CA 95519
(707) 839-2449

mckinleyvillechamber.com

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A QUICK LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING

THURSDAY, MAY 24

★ 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. **Kick-Off Mixer**

State Farm – Heather Viña, 1631 Sutter Rd., McKinleyville

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30

★ 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. **Chili Cook-Off**

McKinleyville Shopping Center, 1500 City Center Rd., McKinleyville

THURSDAY, MAY 31

★ 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. **Fireman's Muster**

Pierson Park - Upper parking lot, 1608 Pickett Rd., McKinleyville

FRIDAY, JUNE 1

★ 8 p.m. to midnight **Dance**

Azalea Hall, 1620 Pickett Rd., McKinleyville

SATURDAY, JUNE 2

★ 8 to 10:30 a.m. **Pancake Breakfast**

Azalea Hall, 620 Pickett Rd., McKinleyville

★ 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Gymkhana**

McKinleyville Rodeo Grounds on Kjer Road, north of the airport

★ 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Open House**

McKinleyville Fire Station

★ 11 a.m. **Pony Express Days Parade**

Central Avenue from Murray Rd. to School Rd.

★ Noon to 4 p.m. **Pony Express Days Festival & Saloon**

Pierson Park

★ 1 to 3 p.m. **Horseshoe Tournament**

Pierson Park horseshoe pits

★ 3 p.m. **Presentation of Parade Winners/ MSPTO No Event**

Pierson Park Stage

SUNDAY, JUNE 3

★ 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. **Gymkhana**

McKinleyville Rodeo Grounds on Kjer Road, north of the airport

FESTIVAL RULES

- Alcohol may only be consumed in the cups provided.
- All patrons are subject to search.
- Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed outside the designated area during the chili cook off and the festival.
- Must be 21 years of age to consume alcohol.
- No alcohol may be brought in to or out of the event.
- No ice chests.
- No weapons are allowed inside the event.
- You must wear an ID wristband to consume alcohol during the chili cook off and festival.

KICK OFF MIXER

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 5:30 TO 7 P.M.

at State Farm-Heather Viña, 1631 Sutter Rd., McKinleyville

KICK OFF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY by joining us at the Chamber Mixer. State Farm-Heather Viña will have her Family Fun Zone set up. Join us for the Grand Opening and Ribbon Cutting ceremony for State Farm - Heather Viña. Grocery Outlet will be providing the food and beverages and a wine tasting with their wine expert.

CHILI COOK-OFF

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30, 5:30 TO 7:30 P.M.

at McKinleyville Shopping Center, 1500 City Center Rd.

FUN AND FOOD FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY. Meet your neighbors for a night of tasting some of the best chili around. Participants will be doing all preparations on-site, starting at noon. Patrons are the judges. Local chefs, professional and amateur, will be preparing their favorite chili and vying for your vote in three different categories: Best Business Chili, Best Amateur Chili and Best Team Spirit. Tickets are \$8 per person. New this year: Chamber members will also be selling hot dogs to eat solo or top it with some of the chili being served. Beer, wine and non-alcoholic beverages will be available for purchase. There will also be a bake sale so you can end the evening with a little dessert!

Partners: Eureka Natural Foods, Mad River Radio, McKinleyville Shopping Center and Six Rivers Brewery.

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FIREMAN'S MUSTER



THURSDAY, MAY 31, 6 TO 7:30 P.M.

at Pierson Park - Upper Parking Lot, 1608 Pickett Rd.

BRING YOUR PICNIC BLANKETS AND LAWN CHAIRS. Cheer for our local firefighters as they compete in various water activities including a Bucket Brigade and Hose Relay. McKinleyville Little League will have Indian Tacos, beverages and sno cones for sale.

Partners: Arcata Fire District & McKinleyville Parks and Recreation Department



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DANCE

FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 8 P.M. TO MIDNIGHT

at Azalea Hall, 1620 Pickett Rd., McKinleyville

This is a 21 and over event

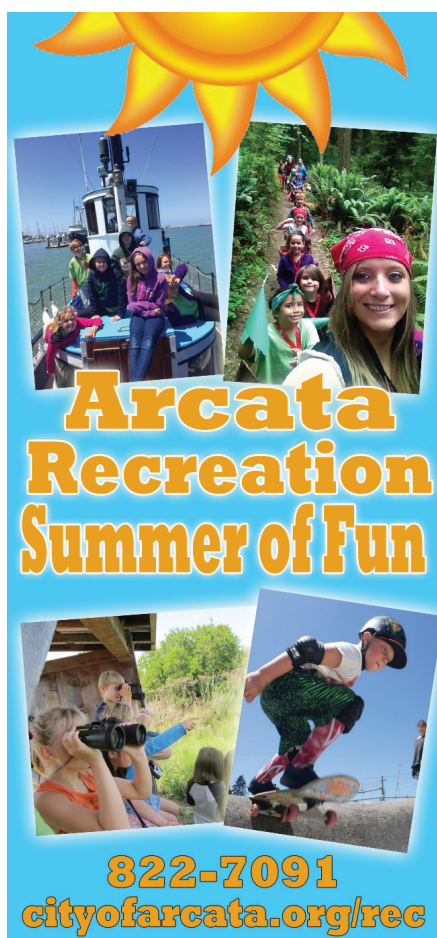
★ Live music by **Lone Star Junction**

★ Boot Contest

★ Saloon by Six Rivers Brewery

★ Food and more!

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PANCAKE BREAKFAST



SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 8 TO 10:30 A.M.
in Azalea Hall, 1620 Pickett Road, McKinleyville

ENJOY A DOWN HOME PANCAKE BREAKFAST served by the
Dow's Prairie Grange members.

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GRAND MARSHALS



Kenny and Cathy Richards are this year's recipients of the Azalea Award.

THE AZALEA AWARD IS AN ANNUAL TRADITION STARTED IN 2001. It is given by the McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce and chosen by the past Azalea Award recipients. The award is traditionally given to McKinleyville community members who have a history of service and continue to serve today.

We are extremely honored to have presented the 2018 Azalea Award to a very deserving couple. Kenny and Cathy Richards have lived in McKinleyville for almost 60 years. They both attended Morris, Dow's Prairie and McKinleyville Middle School and graduated from McKinleyville High in 1971. They said that they had great teachers who inspired them and they could not wait to go to school every day. They met in church and were married at Saint Mary's Catholic Church in 1973 and just celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary.

They both attended College of the Redwoods. Kenny continued on to HSU where he majored in Business and played football. Kenny was employed as a teacher, coach, Department Chair, Assistant Principal



GRAND MARSHALS

and then Principal at McKinleyville High School, his alma mater. He was promoted to the Assistant Superintendent of Business for seven years and then chosen as the Superintendent of Northern Humboldt U.H.S.D for his last fifteen years. He retired in 2012, after 36.5 years of employment. He wasn't very good at sitting and twiddling his thumbs, so he went back to work four years ago at Humboldt State University and is administering the Educational Leadership Administrative Credential program. Cathy was employed as a bookkeeper by a local business and finished her career after working for the Northern Humboldt U.H.S.D. for twenty-five years. She always dealt with the family affairs such as kids, school and athletic events. She never missed a game and often times transported other team members.

They have three boys, their spouses and six grandchildren, whom they are extremely proud of. **Bill** has completed 20 years in the Army with four tours in the Middle East, three in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. Bill and his wife, Amy have four children. **John** has been in the Coast Guard for eight years and is busy saving lives. He and his wife, Maddie have two children. **Thomas** graduated from the University of Oregon, Lundquist Business School. He has been an insurance agent in Arcata for 5 years. He married his wife, Kellie, in September 2017.

When asked for their thoughts on living in McKinleyville for so long, here is what they had to say: "McKinleyville was and continues to be a wonderful, safe community to grow up in. Where we had great families, friends and coworkers that shaped our lives. As kids, we rode our bikes and horses from Clam Beach to Mad River to Baldy Mountain. Most of the time, you could find us somewhere in the neighborhood (boys and girls, brothers and sisters) in a field playing baseball, football, Hide and Seek, or even golf. We all had part-time jobs picking daffodil bulbs in the fields or picking up golf balls at Beau Pre Golf Course. As adults, we were one of the lucky families that worked locally which allowed us to stay home in McKinleyville."

Kenny was fortunate to get a teaching job in McKinleyville. They raised their boys in the same community they called home, around family (Grandmas and Grandpas) and friends. A place with good schools, good people, and good family and friends. People who watch out for kids. Even though horses have the right-of-way, kids are the main focus of McKinleyville....They both say that Kids Rock!

It is a true honor to recognize Kenny and Cathy Richards as the 2018 Azalea Award recipients.



SATURDAY, JUNE 2
11 A.M. START TIME



THE PONY EXPRESS DAYS PARADE IS ARGUABLY THE MAIN EVENT of McKinleyville's annual festival.

The Grand Marshals this year are Kenny and Cathy Richards who were recently awarded the Chamber of Commerce's Azalea Award. The Pony Express Days Parade will follow its usual route down Central Avenue from Murray Road to School Road. Bring the family out to enjoy the many floats and entries. The judge's stand and announcers will be located in front of Coast Central Credit Union. Participants will be judged in six categories: Best Overall, Best Equestrian, Best Vehicle, Best Walking Group, Best Spirit (entry with the most enthusiasm during the parade) and Best Performance (entry that is the most entertaining for the crowd). Winners will be announced at 3 p.m. from the festival stage.

Partners: Mad River Radio, Mad River Rotary and McKinleyville Youth Football

Central Avenue between Murray Road and School Road will be temporarily closed during the Pony Express Days Parade on Saturday, June 2. The parade begins at 11 a.m. on Murray and slowly makes it way down Central Avenue. Roads will be reopened after the parade passes. However, motorists who have failed to plan ahead may find themselves unable to get to or from their homes. If you need to get around town during the parade, you may want to think twice about where you park your car, or better yet use your bicycle or ride your horse, and then you'll have the right of way.

12th FESTIVAL



SATURDAY, JUNE 2, NOON TO 4 P.M.

at Pierson Park

LIVE MUSIC by Taxi,
food and craft vendors, Saloon, informational booths, kid's
activities, a horseshoe tournament and more!

SALOON

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DEMONSTRATIONS AND EXHIBITS

★ **Open House at McKinleyville Fire Station**

★ **United States Coast Guard Helicopter**

HORSESHOE TOURNAMENT

1 p.m. at the Pierson Park horseshoe pits. Check in at
12:45 p.m. Two-person teams, 18 years and older. Get your
application from the McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce
website at www.mckinleyvillechamber.com. Space is limited
and entries are accepted on a first come, first serve basis.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PARADE WINNERS & MSPTO No EVENT - EVENT RAFFLE WINNERS

3 p.m. from the festival stage

FESTIVAL SUPPORT

The Living Water Church will be running support for the festival,
helping with set up and clean up.

They are also partnering with State Farm - Heather Viña to
provide a Family Fun Zone with free kids games and activities.

GYMKHANA



SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JUNE 2 & 3, 9 A.M.
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show of the season. There will be a snack bar and lots of fun.

The event is hosted by the McKinleyville Rodeo Association For more
information, contact Jamie at (707) 496-4840 or visit their facebook page:
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McKINLEYVILLE

A PICTURESQUE COMMUNITY, situated on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean with a backdrop of tree covered mountains. This modern day town, surrounded by rural beauty, has kept its leisurely-paced atmosphere, which makes McKinleyville unique. Mack Town was once known as a place where horses have the right of way, with a hitchin' post outside the post office to tie up your horse. Horses are no longer as common on our main roads, but they still enjoy the good life, especially in northern McKinleyville, better known as Dow's Prairie. With easy access, horseback riders love the broad, sandy, miles-long Clam Beach, one of the most popular in the county.

Take a walk or ride your bike on the scenic Hammond Trail, a paved trail that runs parallel to the coast from one end of McKinleyville to the other. Visit local beaches to spend the day kayaking, surfing, fishing or taking a leisurely stroll looking for treasures. Many outdoor adventures are just minutes away; bird watching, hiking and camping in State Parks and forests, some of the best river fishing in the world, whitewater rafting trips, horseback riding or taking photos of Roosevelt elk in their natural habitat.



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BY JACK
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A BIT OF HISTORY

EVERY YEAR SOMEONE RAISES THE QUESTION: Why does McKinleyville celebrate Pony Express Days, as the famous mail service of the Wild West never delivered to the North Coast?

The answer: The town festival was actually named after a Pony Express-style horse race that was the main attraction in the early years of the event.

The first Pony Express Day was planned for Sunday, Aug. 25, 1968 by the Greater McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce.

“Come and spend the day with us. We have a full exciting program of events, all of which are free,” declared Chamber President Earl Whipple on the front page of the *McKinleyville News*.

Whipple and an army of volunteers planned a barbecue, parade, baseball game and the “main feature of the day” – a Pony Express Race held in what’s now called Pierson Park, which back then was the Pony and Pals Saddle Club horse arena.

“We think you really will have a good time, and do wear your western togs,” Whipple told the *McKinleyville News*.

But on the day of the festival there was an unusual August rainstorm. The parade and baseball game were canceled, while the horse race was rescheduled for Sept. 8, 1968. The barbecue was moved to Pete’s Bella Vista (now the Six Rivers Brewery.) Nearly 3,000 people showed up to consume 2,000 lbs. of beef.

On Sept. 8, the Pony Express Race was held behind the McKinleyville Fire Station. Teams consisting of five riders raced their horses, using mail bags like batons, handing them off to each other as they raced around a circular track.

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A BIT OF HISTORY

At Pony Express Days there were also barrel races, egg throwing and pancake flipping contests.

The following year, 1969, organizers were still worried about having their event rained out.

“Although the sponsors probably got the fright of their collective lives when it started drizzling for a while early Sunday morning, bringing fears of a rerun of last year’s drenching, McKinleyville’s weatherman cooperated by blowing the clouds and fog away to give the second annual Pony Express Day warmth and sunshine,” stated a front page article in the Aug. 27, 1969 edition of the *McKinleyville News*.

The 1969 event began with a parade. The local Pony and Pals Saddle Club won the best youth group award for their equestrian parade entry. Democratic Assemblywoman Pauline Davis was the guest of honor and rode in the lead car in the parade.

There was no official count of how many people came out to watch the parade, but there were about 1,800 who attended the annual barbecue.

“The main attraction, is of course, the Pony Express Race. In this event, which at times gets very rough, and at other times almost comical in nature, especially when the horse won’t play the game according to the rules, teams of five riders in a relay attempt to ride a 300-yard plus course in the quickest time. Instead of passing a baton a saddle bag is used, reminiscent of the Pony Express of the 1860s,” stated an article in the *McKinleyville News*.

Maurice Letz was once again on the winning team.



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20 A BIT OF HISTORY

Patty Peeples, who now resides in Virginia, recalls racing in the event.

“It was fast, furious,” she said about the race in a 2013 interview. “It was exciting.”

Peeples was the first Pony Express Queen, and rode in the parade wearing a crown.

In 1970, two-time Pony Express Race winner Maurice Letz decided to try something different and ride his horse to Fieldbrook and back on the “new Fieldbrook Road,” a 10-mile round trip.

Letz wore western garb and carried a Pony Express-style mailbag full of Pony Express Barbecue tickets, which he planned to sell to Fieldbrook residents when he arrived.

Letz made his way over the hill to the Fieldbrook Grange Hall, where there was a free chuck wagon breakfast.

He then rode back over the hill so he could attend the dedication of the new McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce A-frame building, which now houses The Complete Look across from Eureka Natural Foods. Also at the dedication was Miss Humboldt Gail Straughan, that year’s Grand Marshal.

With some exceptions, the Wild West theme of Pony Express Days has been fairly consistent over the past 50 years.

For several years, the festival included professional rodeos held at the McKinleyville Rodeo Grounds on Kjer Road. But for the past decade and a half, the only major equestrian event during Pony Express Days has been the gymkhana held by the McKinleyville Rodeo Association at the rodeo grounds.

So whatever happened to the festival’s namesake, the Pony Express Race?

According to McKinleyville resident Dennis Mayo, variations on the Pony Express Race continued through the early 1990s, although they weren’t held every single year.

There were at least two challenges to keeping the race going. One was location. The horse arena at what is now Pierson Park became off limits to horses, and eventually was developed with Azalea Hall, McKinleyville Activity Center, McKinleyville Library and the Sheriff’s Office.

The last races were held at Clam Beach, Mayo said. But when the snowy plover was federally listed as a threatened species, complications arose and they stopped holding the race at the beach.

Asked why the Pony Express Race couldn’t be held at the McKinleyville Rodeo Grounds, Mayo had a simple answer: It’s too small.

The Pony Express Race needs a large course. When it was held at what is now



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A BIT OF HISTORY

Pierson Park, volunteers tilled a track that was similar in size to the race track at the Ferndale Fairgrounds.

Another challenge to keeping the race going was continuity, Mayo said. Organizers of the race, and Pony Express Days, come and go. They get hurt and can no longer participate. They have babies. They get jobs elsewhere and move away. Some die.

So Pony Express Days is an ever-changing event that ebbs and flows depending on the volunteers of the time.

In 2005, the leadership of the McKinleyville Chamber of Commerce, led by President Ben Shepherd, decided to take the festival in a new direction with a new name – the Azalea Festival.

The idea was to make it an event that better promoted the area's local businesses. It was going to be a fancier affair, with wine and culinary treats from local restaurants.

At Pierson Park, there was a "Food Garden" and a Wine and Beer Tasting. While adults were sipping cabernets and pinots and nibbling on local cheese, children were making crafts in "The Children's Garden," where they assembled giant tissue paper flowers, pinwheels and kites.

Despite the new twist, the event still had much of the same flavor of the old Pony Express Days, with the parade and deep-pit barbecue being the highlight of the weekend.

But the response to the wine tasting and highbrow culinary events were lackluster. Many old-timers complained and wanted the event changed back to Pony Express Days.


The chamber leadership changed again and there was a new batch of volunteers. In 2009, the chamber conducted a survey, discovering that 75 percent of those who responded said they wanted to change the name back to Pony Express Days.

"The Wild West has returned to McKinleyville!" stated a June 3, 2009 article on the front page of the *McKinleyville Press*. "Last year's Azalea Festival has morphed back into the original Pony Express Days, which many residents believe is closer to the true spirit of Mack Town."

While there still isn't a Pony Express Race, there will be several equestrian entries in Saturday's parade, which begins at 11 a.m. June 2. The McKinleyville Rodeo Association holds its annual gymkhana Saturday and Sunday at the McKinleyville Rodeo Grounds on Kjer Road.

– **Jack Durham, editor, *Mad River Union***






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THE MCKINLEYVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OFFERS PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES for non-profit organizations during fundraising activities. These partners share in the responsibilities and receive a donation for their assistance. For more information about partnership opportunities, contact the McKinleyville Chamber at 707-839-2449 or visit their website at www.mckinleyvillechamber.com.

MAD RIVER ROTARY: A group of community minded individuals who have been involved in Humboldt County projects for decades. The club has an annual fundraiser in October that benefits local projects as well as scholarships and other community initiatives. Projects they continue to support and participate in include: McKinleyville High Scholarships; Annual Luncheon to honor the top 10% of graduating seniors from McKinleyville High School; dictionaries for all third graders in McKinleyville, Blue Lake, Fieldbrook, Big Lagoon and Orick; the International Rotary Youth Exchange Program; and maintenance of the Botanical Garden at Hiller Park. Past major projects that the club has funded include the Sheriff substation, the Teen Center at Pierson Park and the new Fire Station. Recent projects funded by the club include the Rising Star Foundation, Zero Waste Humboldt, PeeWee Basketball, Blue Lake Community Emergency Response Team, and Knox Boxes in McKinleyville through the Humboldt Senior Center. For more information about Mad River Rotary contact Cindy Sutcliffe at cindysutcliffe54@gmail.com.

MCKINLEYVILLE YOUTH FOOTBALL: McKinleyville Youth Football & Cheer serve the youth in our community with the opportunity to learn the value of hard work and the concept of team. These are lessons to last a lifetime. For more information, contact Kelli Schwartz at kellschwartz5@gmail.com.

MCKINLEYVILLE LITTLE LEAGUE: McKinleyville Little League's Motto is: To get children involved into baseball, and to have fun. For more information go to MLL's website: <http://www.mckinleyvillemiddleleague.com/>

KIWANIS CLUB OF MCKINLEYVILLE: Part of a global organization comprised of local volunteers dedicated to changing the world, one child and one community at a time. We strive to help the children of McKinleyville by: supporting McKinleyville Boy and Girl Scouts; Backpack for Kids food program; McKinleyville Parks and Recreation; High School Key Club; McKinleyville Family Resource Center; Salvation Army bell ringing; granting McKinleyville High School scholarships; providing school supplies, science fair supplies, and clothing for children at all the McKinleyville schools; and assist in the Worldwide Day of Play. Kiwanis is dedicated to our children of McKinleyville. For more information about Kiwanis Club of McKinleyville contact David Carbiener at 707-444-6163.

DOW'S PRAIRIE GRANGE: Since the late 1930s, the members of the Dow's Prairie Grange in McKinleyville have worked to build a stronger community through fellowship and service. A strong supporter of youth groups including Girl Scouts, McKinleyville High School, Cub Scouts, McKinleyville Lions Club Winter Express, Kiwanis, and 4-H, Dow's Prairie Grange #505 is also a designated emergency shelter and sponsors local CERT and First Aid classes. For information about membership, the monthly pancake breakfast, flea market, free history presentations, community game nights, or rentals, please contact them directly at dowsgrange@gmail.com or call 707-839-3714.

LIVING WATER CHURCH: Located at 1463 Railroad Dr. in McKinleyville, it is a Bible believing, Love of God demonstrating church that is new to the area. They occupy the former "Faith Temple" building. Their doors have been open since October 2015. They intend to be a community centered ministry through prayer, outreach, and service. For service and Bible study times, please feel free to call 707-498-7785.



SCOP – SHERIFF’S CITIZENS ON PATROL: The eyes and ears of the Sheriff’s department. SCOP is an all volunteer program that assists the law enforcement efforts of the Sheriff’s Office. Volunteers, in a SCOP patrol car, identify as a volunteer effort but also indicate its tie to the Sheriff’s Office. They patrol neighborhoods to be a law enforcement presence and to report suspicious activities. While on patrol, volunteers may conduct vacation checks, patrol identified problem areas, conduct traffic control at incidents, or other activity assigned by the Sheriff’s Dispatch. Volunteers may also assist at other activities such as parades, primarily by providing traffic control. For more information, call 707-268-2536.

THE PEOPLE OF NEW DIRECTIONS: New Directions is an environmental maintenance, outreach and education program providing employment readiness and skill building for the local homeless population while providing entry level work and pay. Since homeless populations lack resources to recover their lives, New Directions will help reintegrate them into the community in a productive manner. For more information, call 707-616-1182.

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